

## The Clearing

Posted by: theseus May 7 2005, 02:12 AM«

Gideon materialises in the clearing, from a momentary and much smoother transportation than the tapestry. The rain patters lightly on his face.

Posted by: theseus May 7 2005, 02:24 AM«

Anna arrives in the clearing, and like Reyn, bursts into flame. She has a harder time of it, however. She screams as the fire takes a few seconds to vanish. When it does, her figure is encased in a black cocoon of obsidian, unmoving. Water droplets steam as they fall upon her.

Posted by: doychi May 7 2005, 07:04 AM«

Tu'Tak's towering and spiny blood red form is frozen in place. Only his mouth moves when he replies to B'rayth. Yes Sir, it means a little. Tassadar is a House of the Courts, known for their ability as bodyguards. I'm not particularly familiar with the house myself."

Posted by: Reyn May 7 2005, 08:06 AM«

Reyn takes a step back as Gideon arrives, although he ensures that his movement does not bring him any closer to BGÇÖrayth's outstretched sword. When Anna materialises and suffers the same fate as himself Reyn moves to help, but stops himself before he can burn himself on the red hot obsidian. Where in Shadow have you sent us Yeesha? Reyn asks to no one in particular. Turning back to answer BGÇÖrayth, Reyn nods, "Yeesha will be here as soon as she sends the rest of us through ... I only hope the trip is safer for them."

Posted by: Jedric May 7 2005, 03:02 PM«

B'rayth frowns and looks askance at the assembling group, he lowers his sword slightly putting it off to the side but obviously has no intention of sheathing it. She will have a lot to explain. These are the Warriors of Light then, how many more are there do you think? And what happened to the woman there? he indicates Anna with a nod."

Posted by: erichenry May 7 2005, 03:48 PM«

Arenea materialises in the clearing in a swirl of silver-grey cloak. Immediately upon appearing she takes a few steps away from her point of arrival. Most of her petite form is shrouded by the all-encompassing cloak, but those who have not seen her before will notice that even with the heels on her boots she barely reaches five feet in height. Arenea looks around those gathered, taking in the scene at a glance. A practised shrug slides the cloak off one of her shoulders, exposing the hilt of the sword slung across her back.

Posted by: Jedric May 7 2005, 04:16 PM«

B'rayth raises an eyebrow at Arenea and with a mocking smile comments, "Welcome my little briollag."

Posted by: ericheny May 7 2005, 06:50 PM«

You've called me that before Arenea comments quietly. "What does it mean?"

Posted by: Jedric May 7 2005, 08:10 PM«

B'rayth grins at her then casually comments, "Just that you are not what you appear to be, or try to appear to be."

Posted by: Curufea May 8 2005, 12:15 AM«

Gideon stares at the cocoon that was Anna. Does this mean she was bad? The rain plasters his short black hair down, and completely soaks the simple shirt he wears. The staff in his hand slips slightly on the wet ground as he supports the weight of his bandaged foot. He seems to be taking it as just another day to have weapons pointed at people... The appearance of Tu'Tak causes his eyes to widen, lips to thin, his stance to change to one slightly more on edge, waiting to see what the beast does next as he glances around for exits.

Posted by: Reyn May 8 2005, 09:42 AM«

While attempting to respond to both B'rayth's and Gideon's questions Reyn takes a step closer to Gideon, ready to lend support should his staff slip completely on the wet ground. His own short hair is by now completely sodden, sticking fast and close to his head, and the 'delightful' smell of natural fibres first burned and then wet follows him. Anna ... and I ... had a rather bad reaction to this Shadow. I don't know really how to describe it, it's nothing I have ever experienced before. All I have for you is a gut feeling that wherever we are it's a long, long way from Chaos. The pain was quite intense, and Anna's body reacted instinctively to save her. I don't know how long she'll be like that, or whether we'll need to get her back to the Courts before she will be able to come out of it at all.

Posted by: doychi May 8 2005, 10:07 AM«

After the arrival of Reyn, Tu'Tak has remained frozen, like a statue. The only hint of life, his eyes tracking each of the arrivals and the few words he spoke to B'rayth.

Posted by: ericheny May 8 2005, 10:37 AM«

QUOTE (Jedric @ May 7 2005, 09:10 PM) B'rayth grins at her then casually comments, "Just that you are not what you appear to be, or try to appear to be." Her face still hidden in the depths of the hood, Arenea tilts her head slightly as she regards B'rayth. "A strange statement to make" she remarks, "given you know nothing about me". With that, she moves to stand near Reyn. She stands with her back to him, looking away from the group, scanning for potential threats. The falling rain beads and rolls off her cloak, indicating that the fabric is waterproof.

Posted by: Sim May 8 2005, 12:13 PM«

Yeesha fades into view. Her left hand held forward, her right holding the cover of the book on her belt. She looks around the clearing while she shuffles across to the spot where her dream representation had disappeared from moments before. Unlike the dream Yeesha, this one is suffering the effects of the falling raindrops. Her cotton drill clothing quickly soaks through, and she starts to shiver. The next few moments are spent listening to the others while she digs through her pack for an olive green waterproof poncho. She throws it over her head. It reaches her knees. It is then that she sees Anna, and steps to her side. What happened?

Posted by: Jedric May 8 2005, 04:16 PM«

QUOTE (erichenry @ May 8 2005, 10:37 AM) Her face still hidden in the depths of the hood, Arnea tilts her head slightly as she regards B'rayth. A strange statement to make" she remarks, "given you know nothing about me". " B'rayth snorts slightly then comments, Not much, but enough." When Yeesha arrives he shakes his head and takes a step backward. He then sheathes his blade and nods to Reyn before speaking to Yeesha. Interesting method of arrival my lady, are we all here?

Posted by: Sim May 8 2005, 08:05 PM«

For now... yes. There are others, but they have not made contact yet. I daresay that we well run into them later. She turns to Gideon. I can't hear the girl. She may be in danger... What happened here? I lost contact when Reyn linked through."

Posted by: Curufea May 9 2005, 08:06 AM«

Gideon turns to Yeesha, I'm not sure, Reyn thinks she may be okay, but should probably be moved to some other shadow. She may stay in this cocoon thingy forever, while she's here." He gestures at the black ovoid. And then there's this chap, he says, waving at Tu' Tak."

Posted by: Reyn May 9 2005, 06:51 PM«

Indeed Reyn comments to Gideon's observation. "Our friend back there knows of the Houses of the Courts, and so it seems doubtful that he is a native of this Shadow." With his sword sheathed B'rayth doesn't seem any less of a danger, and Reyn's movements continue to treat him with the same sort of respect one would bestow on any dangerous creature. Perhaps you would do us the honour of introducing yourself, your compatriots and your world?"

Posted by: Jedric May 9 2005, 07:17 PM«

B'rayth glances at Reyn, his expression bland but for a slight tightening around the jaw and a narrowing of the eyes, both minor and easily missed. A courtier as well as bodyguard Lord Reyn? I am B'rayth, I own no allegiance to a House or Clan other than my oath to the Yarla of Guaine. B'rayth smiles very slightly, My world? I'm not sure I own that either, but it is called Kruinne, in the old L'vhar that means simply 'the world'. " Turning slightly he indicates R'shall and Tu'Tak in turn, My comrades are R'shall, a friend and sword brother, and Tu'Tak there who can I believe best speak for himself."

Posted by: Curufea May 10 2005, 08:40 AM«

Yes, I'm sure I heard this demon talk earlier... Gideon eyes it, warily.

Posted by: Reyn May 11 2005, 01:21 PM«

I'm quite sure; Tu'Tak was it? Reyn asks, addressing the demon, "Is quite friendly unless provoked Gideon, so there's no need to be so much on edge." Returning his gaze to B'rayth, Reyn smiles. While the smile is a little forced, it does not seem ingenuine. I have no doubt Tu'Tak will speak when he feels he wants to, although I will admit to being curious as to whether he is here at Yeesha's request like we are or whether he follows you. I had assumed that you were a native of this Shadow, but if Tu'Tak is here for the latter reason I may have to re-evaluate that assumption. As for being a courtier, well, sometimes we are asked to guard those in high positions, and it is always good to know how to conduct oneself while in the company of ones betters." A shiver runs down Reyn's body as his clothes become completely drenched. I hate to sound like a whining brat, but is there any reason why we can't continue this conversation indoors?"

Posted by: Curufea May 11 2005, 01:34 PM«

I've had, rather less than happy encounters with demons before, Reyn. I don't wish to sound ungentlemanly, but it is difficult not to be rude to those that relentlessly cause you harm. Gideon then peers with one eye up at the rain. But I second that motion. B'rayth, is it? You seem to know this Kruiinne place, can you take us somewhere more congenial? Although I have no idea how we'll move Anna, with all that steam boiling off her shell. He smiles mischievously, Perhaps we should roll her?"

Posted by: Jedric May 11 2005, 05:19 PM«

Responding to Reyn and Gideon B'rayth nods and turns slightly to look at Tu'Tak. Tu'Tak follows me through his own choice, he is a comrade in arms and I consider him to be a sword brother. As to my being a native of this shadow, that depends on your point of view. B'rayth leaves the comment in the air, but has what may be a half smile upon his face." Turning back to face Gideon B'rayth states simply, Tu'Tak will not harm you unless he has a very good reason." With a sigh he pauses before speaking again, Indoors is it? I like the rain as little as you Reyn. But I don't know for sure where we should go or even if it's safe to move from this place. You see we were on our way back to Guaine when we were beset by a horde of hellcreatures. This clearing seems to bear some enchantment that keeps them at bay, an enchantment which may be what has caused the lady to become... what we see here." he indicates Anna." Perhaps if we move her from the clearing we may see a change. B'rayth looks uncertain, he is perhaps speculating on matters outside his experience and expertise." I'm not even sure we're in the same place or where the hell creatures are now, there was a strange shift before you all arrived... but if I can find a recognisable landmark I can lead you.

Posted by: erichenry May 11 2005, 05:51 PM«

Hellcreatures? Arenea repeats in her normal almost-whisper. "Can you describe them?"

Posted by: Jedric May 11 2005, 06:17 PM«

B'rayth speaks without turning to look at Arenea, he appears distracted almost as if he is thinking about something else, Aye I can little one, they are reptilian creatures, with red slitted eyes, they wield crooked swords wickedly barbed and ride upon fire-breathing mountsGÇ³ “ B'rayth glances at R'shall as he mentions the fire breathing horses. ... and I believe they are connected to the wraith in some way. BGÇÖrayth looks up at Arenea and smiles, then looking around at the others in the group he bows, GÇ£I am BGÇÖrayth MGÇÖka NaGÇÖSahv.GÇ¥ He stands waiting.

Posted by: Reyn May 11 2005, 06:22 PM«

With a slightly nervous tone in his voice Reyn asks, These 'hell-creatures', they don't carry with them an emblem of a crown by any chance do they?”

Posted by: Jedric May 11 2005, 06:32 PM«

R'shall draws his breath in sharply as Reyn speaks, a worried look on his face. He subsides when B'rayth glances his way. B'rayth looks at Reyn with a disappointed expression then comments in a cool tone, I didnGÇÖt see one, no.“

Posted by: Curufea May 11 2005, 06:55 PM«

Gideon turns to B'rayth, realising the politeness of introductions. I was, until recently, Lord Verence Haldane. But now, I just go by the name Gideon. He bows to B'rayth, curtly. And you'll have to excuse my lack of etiquette regarding the Courts, I have forgotten much over the years. These 'hellcreatures', sound very familiar though - I believe they may be similar to the ones that were lately chasing me.

Posted by: Jedric May 11 2005, 07:15 PM«

B'rayth gives an abbreviated bow and a nod as Gideon introduces himself; with a short smile he answers. I am honoured Gideon. The Courts of Chaos is but a name to me, so I am even less versed in the etiquette of that place than are you. You may be right about the hellcreatures, I'm sure we'll meet them again so you'll be able to decide for yourself. B'rayth's eyes flick around the other members of the group his stance is still and set, almost rigid. I will allow that perhaps you do not understand the manner of things in Kruinne, and that I am not always the most open of individuals, therefore let me say that I know the names of Reyn, Yeesha, Gideon... with a quick glance Arenea's way, "... and Arenea? Only Gideon and I have formally spoken as equals. The lady in the blackened shell, Anna is it? I know nothing of her but a name.“

Posted by: Reyn May 11 2005, 08:10 PM«

Reyn raises an eyebrow at B'rayth's last comment, but any accompanying rebuttal is held back. He does however move to walk past Arenea, briefly holding her gaze as he does so before moving to stand beside her. If this glade does have an enchantment on it that holds the hellcreatures back, it may be what is affecting Anna. While she is in essence very very different to the creatures that have harassed you B'rayth, the magic on this place may not be able to discern the difference. Her surface has cooled enough in the rain to be carried, can we be going?

Posted by: Sim May 12 2005, 05:25 AM«

Yeesha nods soggily. Yes, lets." She turns to B'rayth, How far is it to Guaine?"

Posted by: Jedric May 12 2005, 06:51 AM«

B'rayth glances across at Yeesha and shakes his head, he mutters something under his breath in an exasperated tone before speaking more loudly. Good question. I don't even know if this place exists in the real world or somehow moves to and fro from the Otherworld. On foot from where we were originally we'd have reached Guaine in two or three hours, but now I'm not sure. That's assuming we are all in favour of going to Guaine! B'rayth pauses and turns away, as he walks toward R'shall he comments, There were hundreds of hellcreatures laying siege to this place, and since I don't know where they are I have no way of knowing if it's safe to leave this place." Turning back to the group he eyes them critically before speaking again. We cannot leave R'shall here but he will slow us down if we bring him with us...

Posted by: erichenry May 12 2005, 02:26 PM«

Arenea turns to follow the conversation of the others, being careful to keep her distance from B'rayth. Underneath the cover of her cloak, she slips the glove off of her left hand. As she steps closer to Reyn, the front of the cloak opens enough for him to see what she has done. She stands silently, waiting for a decision to be reached.

Posted by: Curufea May 12 2005, 02:31 PM«

QUOTE (Jedric @ May 12 2005, 07:51 AM) We cannot leave R'shall here but he will slow us down if we bring him with us... Gideon glances down at his own injured foot before looking up quizzically and scrutinising R'shall for obvious injuries.

Posted by: Curufea May 13 2005, 10:18 AM«

If you wish, Mr B'rayth, I will help carry your friend. I have got a staff... Actually, if we could get another long pole, and borrow someone's cloak for a stretcher?, Gideon hazards."

Posted by: doychi May 13 2005, 10:41 AM«

We already have a litter, it's just over there. Tu'Tak points over his shoulder with one clawed finger towards a make-shift litter that is now soaked through."

Posted by: Jedric May 13 2005, 05:09 PM«

B'rayth nods when Tu'Tak mentions the litter and inclines his head to Gideon. You are injured already sir Gideon, I think Tu'Tak and I can manage. But thank you for offering, and BGÇÖrayth please no misters thank you. R'shall sighs loudly and calls out, For Nedar's sake do something I'm freezing to death here." B'rayth turns his head momentarily toward R'shall and grins, facing to the others again B'rayth shrugs as he speaks, I can lead you but we may be walking into a trap." Glancing at Reyn and Arenea, B'rayth smiles crookedly, Perhaps our bodyguard and our actress can scout ahead for us, unless one of you wishes to take my place at the litter?"

Posted by: ericheny May 13 2005, 08:50 PM«

Arenea glances at Reyn, then trots off towards the edge of the clearing without saying a word.

Posted by: Reyn May 13 2005, 09:20 PM«

Reyn pauses before turning to follow Arenea, Sounds good to me, but I'm without a sword right now, so if it comes to a fight I will assume a form not unlike Tu'Tak there, so be sure of your target before you commit to melee. It would be just so embarrassing to be killed by one's allies." Reyn trots off after Arenea before she gets too far ahead.

Posted by: Jedric May 14 2005, 03:48 AM«

B'rayth watches Reyn as he follows Arenea, ostensibly on their scouting mission, he makes no comment. He shrugs and casually states, Let us get organised. Tu'Tak if you'll fetch the litter?" Turning to Gideon and Yeesha he asks, I don't suppose either one of you can heal R'shall, I've seen so many uncanny things in the last couple of days I'd believe anything, we should check him over at the very least before we move him." R'shall sits patiently waiting in the rain.

Posted by: Curufea May 14 2005, 08:24 AM«

Physic, heal thyself, Gideon waggles his foot with a wry smile, "Sorry, I can't help there.."

Posted by: doychi May 14 2005, 08:53 AM«

Tu'Tak obediently trots of and collects the litter and the rest of the gear that B'rayth, R'shall and he brought into the clearing. After a few moments Tu'Tak returns with the three packs and the litter. I think that's everything, Sir".

Posted by: ericheny May 14 2005, 05:12 PM«

Arenea slows down to allow Reyn to catch up to her as she nears the edge of the clearing. Any preference on how we handle this? she asks in a whisper."

Posted by: Reyn May 16 2005, 01:25 PM«

With a sigh and a shake of his head Reyn whispers, There isn't a pole long enough in all the multiverse to aptly describe just how I would like to handle this, but I think I'm going to have to take the chance and just have you disseminate all your information to the entire group in one go." A deep breath and settling of shoulders are the only outside signs of the stress Reyn is feeling with the realisation of what he has asked for may result in the end of his House. If Yeesha is right, and I have every reason to believe that she is, we're in an all or nothing situation. If we keep back some information because it is politically sensitive it may end up screwing up all of existence, and I'm not about to take that chance."

Posted by: theseus May 16 2005, 05:32 PM«

Arenea and Reyn walk through the rain and clouds of mist. Abruptly the mist parts. A large number of green reptilian humanoids with red slitted eyes are revealed. They are gathered in a rough circle around the clearing, paying little attention to their surroundings. They are wearing crude armour, and wielding spears and barbed swords. Deftly, Arenea and Reyn return to the cover of mist unseen.

Posted by: erichenry May 16 2005, 05:47 PM«

Definitely she's on. Arenea murmurs. Not too well-equipped though and definitely not paying attention to their surroundings. If we made a sudden rush, we might be able to break through their lines. What do you think? She looks expectantly at Reyn, and then adds with a shy smile. You really are getting soaked, you know.

Posted by: Sim May 16 2005, 05:47 PM«

Yeesha closes her journal, snaps back to reality and says to no one in particular, this pillar... It's a clue. I'm sure of it. It's too different to its surroundings. We must be able to use it somehow to progress to the next part of our journey." She walks closer to the fallen pillar. Can anyone read this writing? She looks about, "Anyone at all?"

Posted by: Curufea May 16 2005, 06:00 PM«

Gideon wanders over to have a look in the vague hope he may have encountered the language before, and always willing to give something a try.

Posted by: doychi May 16 2005, 06:00 PM«

At Yeesha's request Tu'Tak informs everyone, The text on the column is Sanskrit. Unfortunately I can't tell you any more, as I don't read Sanskrit."

Posted by: Sim May 16 2005, 10:00 PM«

Yeesha stares at the Sanskrit, obviously frustrated. She takes a deep breath and tilts her head to one side. Oh! It is the same as in Dream... Beyond this portal lies something. Well that was helpful! She frowns at the letters, then looks up to where Arenea and Reyn had gone."

Posted by: Jedric May 16 2005, 10:06 PM«

B'rayth watches Yeesha and as she reads the words he leans forward urgently, Can you not read the last part, it is important that I find out what this place is, or was. It is my place I feel it." Almost as an afterthought he gestures toward the engraved stone at the base of the pillar and comments, ... and do not touch the tablet."

Posted by: Reyn May 17 2005, 09:23 AM«



Reyn looks up at Arenea and as if in response to her last comment a large drop of water runs down his forehead between his eyes and hangs comically for a moment on the tip of his nose before falling off. So my cunning attempt at disguising that fact has failed then? Reyn chuckles quietly, but then his face turns serious once more. "You're also spot on about the demons. The only other laiGÇÖsheGÇÖon I've seen were the ones that are part of King Uthor's private army, but these don't seem to be as well equipped, and we can only hope not as well trained. The problem is that if they are the King's troops they're not wearing his insignia and the shoddy weaponry they carry could just be part of the ruse. I wish we knew just who this B'rayth is to the Courts. The pair walk a few more steps back towards the centre of the glade before Reyn speaks once more, If they are just what they seem to be, we could break through their lines, especially if we use B'rayth and his injured companion as bait. As far as the laiGÇÖsheGÇÖon know they are the only ones in here, so if they make a run for it they'll give chase, and then the rest of us can fall on them from behind and surprise them." As they break through the last trees into the glade proper Reyn scans the assembled crew. Gideon leaning wounded on his staff, B'rayth and Tu'Tak preparing their injured friend for travel, Yeesha studying the pillar and Anna, helpless and motionless in her cocoon. Turning to Arenea at his side Reyn quietly remarks, Of course when I say 'the rest of us' obviously I mean just you and me. Ugh, we need another plan."

Posted by: Curufea May 17 2005, 11:58 AM«

QUOTE (Jedric @ May 16 2005, 11:06 PM) B'rayth watches Yeesha and as she reads the words he leans forward urgently, Can you not read the last part, it is important that I find out what this place is, or was. It is my place I feel it." Almost as an afterthought he gestures toward the engraved stone at the base of the pillar and comments, ... and do not touch the tablet." Hmm, I think I can read this, Gideon says, sounding somewhat surprised." It says, and I quote -: The Feynim, rescuers of the repressed, create this world for those of the new blood, a place of refuge in times of need. The desires of those of the new blood shall shape reality... Gideon looks further down the fallen pillar. We welcome as well, all the Warriors of Light, and their companions. The Progenitor will arrive for his initiation into the ways of the Key, to know himself, before knowing the path, and knowing to become. The Creator will be given a gift of sight and of light, entwined for eternity with the passion of artistic visionGÇª Excuse me, please.. Gideon ducks around B'rayth and Yeesha." Ahem The Saviour will arrive when the threat of the ancient gods awakens. An orphan of the new blood, he will promise protection, perhaps saving all the worlds from cataclysm. He will be known as a fool. He will become king, or kneel before another, depending on his choice in the place of light and darkness. Near the base, Gideon scrutinises the writing. The Warriors of the Light will arrive throughout future history, being called on to protect the endangered, brave the unspeakable, and to fathom the becoming. And finally, The Key unlocks all doors. All those who follow the Way of Light will discover salvation only by first becoming who they are. He pauses. Well, there you have it, but I don't know what to make of it.

Posted by: erichenry May 17 2005, 06:17 PM«

GÇ£I agree that we need a better planGÇ¥ Arenea remarks. GÇ£Unfortunately this isnGÇÖt really my kind of fight. Dis isnGÇÖt usually hired to take out hordes of hell-creatures.GÇ¥ Arriving back at the pillar in time to hear Gideon translate the tablet, Arenea looks at Reyn bewilderedly. GÇ£Artistic vision? she repeats almost inaudibly."

Posted by: Jedric May 17 2005, 06:46 PM«

B'rayth listens to Gideon's translation head cocked to one side and a frown writ across his face. When

Gideon finishes B'rayth asks quietly, "What in the six hells are the Feynim?" Pausing he shakes his head and speaks once again in a questioning tone, "Orphan of the new blood?"

Posted by: Reyn May 18 2005, 11:17 AM«

QUOTE (ericheny @ May 17 2005, 06:17 PM) Arriving back at the pillar in time to hear Gideon translate the tablet, Arenea looks at Reyn bewilderedly. "Artistic vision?" she repeats almost inaudibly. Reyn nods, "And the part about inheriting a gift of sight - his mother is a seer. I thought we'd be crossing paths with him again." As they advance to assemble with the rest of the group Reyn raises his voice so all can hear. The demons are still out there, encircling this glade but kept back from it. Getting out will not be a straightforward task unfortunately. It's a pity we can't turn this protection magic off and let them in, from what I felt when we arrived turning it back on once they surround us here would be most ... illuminating."

Posted by: doychi May 18 2005, 03:36 PM«

Tu'Tak states in the tones of a well trained servant, "Lord Reyn, I'm not sure if it matters, but the column and the tablet both seem to provide this clearing with a source of protection." And continues with a slight tone of uncertainty, "It is possible that moving the tablet will break the protection, or that the protection will move with it."

Posted by: Jedric May 18 2005, 05:07 PM«

B'rayth looks at Tu'Tak and then at the others, "Mmph, I don't know why, and I can't explain it, but I think moving the tablet would break the charm." He looks askance at R'shall as he continues, "Also bear in mind that this place is patently not simply a ruin. I've been wandering this world for... a long time, I have no memory of this clearing and this column and I must assume that they weren't here until a few hours ago."

Posted by: ericheny May 18 2005, 06:38 PM«

Arenea clears her throat softly to attract attention. "Um, if we are not going to be moving on immediately, I might take this opportunity to impart the information I have to share about the object of our quest," she says quietly. Shifting her head slightly to look at B'rayth she adds, "Just so I am not accused of hiding anything. The artefact we looking for is known as the Sign of Chaos. It is an ancient gold ring with an inscription in Sanskrit upon the inside. It disappeared from the Courts of Chaos in ages past and somehow ended up in the possession of a king called King Önoss of Klaythe. The only information I have on King Klaythe is contained in this legend. She reaches into her backpack and pulls out a leather folder. She leans forward slightly, so the folder is shielded by her body and her waterproof cloak. Opening the folder, Arenea starts reading. Although her voice is quiet, it is obviously the voice of someone used to making verbal reports. "Lyath Ölenn was a pirate chieftain who ravaged the coasts of the kingdoms of Klaythe and Darak; some say he was a nobleman named Ömor exiled wrongly from his homeland (opinion is divided on where his homeland was, some say he was from Klaythe others from Darak). Another version has Lyath Ölenn originally named Öleth, the son of a peasant (from Klaythe or Darak), who rose up to slay the evil strong. For years he waged a war against oppressors of the common man. The mention of his name brought terror to the forces of the nobles and high born. Some time during Lyath's reign of terror, Önoss king of Klaythe apparently went mad, many say he was

possessed by a demon. His son KwaGÇÖlin, seeing that the king needed to be removed for the sake of the realm declared the king unfit and claimed the throne for himself. War ensued. GÇ£The power of the king was still great however, and the prince found his forces pushed back. At this time Lyath FGÇÖlenn had a prophetic dream, in the dream he saw that the king would destroy the realm if not stopped. Lyath went to prince KwaGÇÖlin and offered his aid. GÇ£With Lyath the prince rallied support from the populace and after many battles cornered the king in a great fortress. At last the fortress fell, the king was slain by the prince and the realm of Klaythe was saved. GÇ£Lyath FGÇÖlenn was then offered the position of High Lord of Justice. Lyath refused stating that he only wished for the promise of the prince that he and all his heirs would treat the common man justly and with dignity, prince KwaGÇÖlin agreed. GÇ£Lyath FGÇÖlenn left the princeGÇÖs service but promised that he would return to wreak revenge upon the prince or any of his descendants if they broke the oath. Lyath was never seen or heard from again. Although the popular myth has Lyath set to return at a time of peril for the common folk of Klaythe.GÇ¥ Finishing reading, she closes the folder and puts in back in her rucksack before straightening up.

Posted by: Jedric May 18 2005, 08:20 PM«

As Arenea speaks B'rayth, showing signs of fatigue, rubs his hand across his face and stifles a yawn. He listens passively at first and merely smiles slightly when Arenea speaks about not being accused of hiding things, and when she mentions the Sign of Chaos he looks speculatively at Yeesha. As Arenea begins relating the legend of Lyath F'lenn B'rayth reacts strangely, his expression hardens and he turns away. He paces some distance away as she continues her narrative, when Arenea's tale is over he turns back to face her, his expression and his tone are intense, almost angry. What use are legends girl, I've heard that particular fantasy many times believe me, there is little truth to it.

Posted by: erichenry May 18 2005, 10:17 PM«

Arenea cringes slightly under B'yrath's fury and moves closer to Reyn. I told you because it was the information I was given" she whispers. "I doubt I would have been given it if it was not relevant in some way."

Posted by: Sim May 19 2005, 03:44 AM«

Yeesha glares at B'rayth. Everyone here is bringing different skills and information. Everything is to be considered carefully if we are to succeed." She smiles as she looks at Arenea. Our people take great pride in our legends, stories are a way of preserving the past. Thank you for trusting us with your information, I appreciate the gesture, even if others do not." She looks into the distance for a moment, running her index finger along her bottom lip. Do those places mean anything to any one? Klaythe or Darak?"

Posted by: Jedric May 19 2005, 04:24 AM«

B'rayth stares at Yeesha and heatedly comments, Speak when you understand what I am talking about Deroi, if a legend is a lie it honours no one." He shakes his head and taking a deep breath he makes an effort to regain his composure, Yeesha, your pardon. I may explain at another time, but then again I may not." With a sigh he continues, Aye, I know Darak and Klaythe, they are Kingdoms south and east of here. Klaythe is a way away, maybe 200 miles to the south, beyond the kingdom of Nathir, Darak is south east and further even than that."

Posted by: Reyn May 19 2005, 05:38 PM«

So we have a direction, states Reyn as he absent-mindedly pushed a few strands of his wet hair back from where they have fallen over his eye, "But we still need to get out of here. I'm not one to believe very much in coincidences, and to have two of you who have never been in this place before suddenly both 'feel' that moving the tablet will disrupt the protection spell is enough of a clue for me to say let's try it." The problem is, what's our back up plan if putting the tablet back once the demons are in the area of its affect doesn't reactivate the spell and set fire to them all?

Posted by: doychi May 19 2005, 05:46 PM«

In a humble tone Tu'Tak asks, Sir Gideon, would you mind reading the first part of the text on the column again. There is something... something that I want to check."

Posted by: Curufea May 20 2005, 08:55 AM«

Gideon looks up startled at the creature talking to him and shocked into truth. I'm no sir. I was only a lord in a past life, he ends as a mumble." Ah, The Feynim, rescuers of the repressed, create this world for those of the new blood, a place of refuge in times of need. The desires of those of the new blood shall shape reality...

Posted by: Reyn May 20 2005, 09:18 AM«

Since his last comment Reyn has been deep in thought, holding his hand up and turning it over and back several times as if examining his own skin in minute detail. The resultant response as he looks up therefore is perhaps a little unexpected. Bugger. When the others look to him for an explanation a self-deprecating smile crosses his features. I think I know how I can nullify the protection spell over this glade for a short time. There are two problems however." Reyn turn to look directly at B'rayth, The first is I'm going to have to touch the tablet." There is a pause and then Reyn shrugs and sighs deeply. To no one in particular he mutters, The second is I expect this will hurt like hell."

Posted by: doychi May 20 2005, 09:39 AM«

Tu'Tak, a little disturbed that Reyn would consider something so painful, suggests Lord Reyn, perhaps you won't need to. If you would let me follow my thoughts through, I might know some one who can help." Arenea, you mentioned something about a Liath, Lath or some one. Could you please read the bit about him again. I might be wrong, but I think there's a connection.

Posted by: erichenry May 20 2005, 09:49 AM«

Arenea closes her eyes and begins to speak, obviously reciting the requested passage from memory. GÇ£Lyath FGÇÖlenn was a pirate chieftain who ravaged the coasts of the kingdoms of Klaythe and Darak; some say he was a nobleman named KGÇÖmor exiled wrongly from his homeland (opinion is divided on where his homeland was, some say he was from Klaythe others from Darak). Another version has Lyath FGÇÖlenn originally named VGÇÖleth, the son of a peasant (from Klaythe or Darak), who rose up to slay the evil strong. She finishes speaking, then opens her eyes and asks Was that the

part you wanted, or should I go on?"

Posted by: doychi May 20 2005, 10:02 AM«

No. Thank you Arenea. That was the bit I was after. Gideon, is it possible that 'the Feynim' could be interpreted differently? It's just that 'FGÇÖlenn' sound a bit like, sounds like they might be related and I'm wondering if there is a possible connection between the two. Possibly the Feynim are descendants of F'lenn. In any case, there might be someone who can give us a little more on a few of our issues. Lord Suhuy mentioned 'they are awake' and the end of the universe. Perhaps Lord Suhuy might be able to give us more details if we approach him. Does any one have a way we could make it back to the Courts?

Posted by: Jedric May 20 2005, 04:31 PM«

B'rayth somehow manages to both frown and smile slightly as Tu'Tak speaks, then slowly he ventures a comment. Tu'Tak, I don't see how they can be connected. Lyath F'lenn was a pirate chief, are you suggesting his descendants created this place or did the passage mean the Feynim created Kruinne? As far as I can say, the legend relates to a period about 100 years ago, I assume any descendants of his would be born after that. Besides the name itself is a nickname, Grey Gull, Lyath meaning Grey and F'lenn meaning Gull, it was taken according to legend from his habit of wearing a hat with a gull's feather cockade.

Posted by: doychi May 20 2005, 05:23 PM«

Yes Sir, that is exactly what I'm suggesting. I could be completely wrong, but it feels to me as if this information is linked in some way. How, I'm not sure, but I think this could be it.

Posted by: erichenry May 20 2005, 11:38 PM«

Um Arenea says hesitantly, obviously uncomfortable about speaking up, "it's a good idea Tu'Tak, but I don't think it's right in this case. I've heard the name the Feynim before. They are, or were, an ancient race who were somehow linked to the founding of Chaos. I regret I cannot recall any more details of the legend than that." Finishing she falls silent and draws back even deeper inside her hood, painfully aware that everyone is now looking at her.

Posted by: Reyn May 21 2005, 07:56 AM«

Reyn casts his eyes across the glade and the travellers within it before turning to Yeesha. Somehow I don't think any of us are used to democracies, and none of us know the others well enough to completely trust them yet, so for the moment it looks like providence has made you the leader of this joyous little mission Yeesha, and a group like this needs a leader." Motioning to each group in turn Reyn points out the obvious, You've got three distinct groups to govern here. B'rayth with Tu'tak and their wounded friend, Gideon and the somewhat indisposed Anna, Arenea and myself. You seem to stand alone, and that may be your greatest asset for the moment in leading us." My point is that we can't just sit here debating tactics forever. I don't believe anyone here has a way of returning to the Courts quickly, or at least no one admitted to having one when Tu'Tak asked. Reyn paces around the group as he talks, If we are to continue it seems that we must go south." Turning to the demon Reyn

nods towards his wounded comrade, "Tu'Tak, while it is obvious that you are concerned about your friend, we will need you in the vanguard, so someone else needs to help him. B'rayth should also head up the lead, along with Arenea to make a hole in the enemy for the rest of us to get through." Gideon, if Anna comes out of her cocoon when the spell is broken then yourself, Anna and Yeesha can help each other out and follow the first group. You are wounded yourself and Anna will be at the very least in a weakened state. Reyn pauses for a moment and then adds in a cautious tone, "Oh, and she'll be very hungry, remember that." When the demons are in and you are away I'll restart the protection on this place, pick up B'rayth's friend and run after you. I'll have to wait until Anna is out at least or she will be hit again as well, that's why I need our three best combatants up front breaking their ranks. Coming full circle and facing Yeesha once more Reyn takes a deep breath and allows the group a moment to assimilate his plan. What do you say Yeesha?"

Posted by: Jedric May 21 2005, 04:48 PM«

B'rayth looks at Reyn without expression then speaks. I have no objection to Yeesha leading, for the moment at least. I had intended going via Guaine in any case, it is my duty to speak to Lord G'orhm since I was leader of the scout party he sent out to locate these damned creatures in the first place. The Yarla needs to be informed of the loss of his scouts if no more. B'rayth narrows his eyes in thought before continuing, I have one question, once we have left this place, what is to stop the hellcreatures from simply following us rather than venturing into the clearing, protective spell or no?" B'rayth glances up at the sky and shrugs, The rain will stop soon, if Baith will's it we'll have fog to mask our movements."

Posted by: Reyn May 21 2005, 05:30 PM«

Heh, Reyn chuckles slightly, "That's what makes this plan so dangerous B'rayth. The only reason the demons will have to enter the clearing once the spell drops is the fact that you are still here." It'll come down to some pretty close timing, but you can't start to run until they enter, and then I have to bring the spell back on after you get out but before they get the chance to follow you. The slightly manic smile on Reyn's face does nothing to cover his own nervousness. If this day is ever talked about over port and cigars late at night in the halls of the Great Houses I'm sure they'll refer to it as the 'Bonehead' maneuver."

Posted by: Sim May 21 2005, 06:22 PM«

Yeesha nods. It seems like the best idea. We should only have to do it once. I can write reference pages to other places on this world after I've visited them." Her face takes on an expression of concern. B'rayth, if you are caught with no way out, use the tapestry on one of the fallen stones here, I will come get you from The Cleft. Go down the ladder near the windmill, don't go up the mountain." She turns to the others, I will stay with the injured. If this goes belly-up, convene on me and I'll whisk us away to Relto." Oh, and does anyone have a sword that they can lend Reyn? It would be wise to have everyone armed as best as possible.

Posted by: Jedric May 21 2005, 07:27 PM«

B'rayth frowns at Reyn as speaks, particularly when he suggests that the hellcreatures are after him rather than any other particular objective, then nods thoughtfully. We can at least try your plan. To Yeesha he again nods and then walks over to R'shall and after a brief discussion appropriates his

sword, he then returns to the main group and offers the blade to Reyn. R'shall has agreed to lend you his sword, it may be heavier than you're used to Reyn but I'm sure you'll manage, I'd have had R'shall lend you his armour too but I think it'd be too big.

Posted by: doychi May 21 2005, 10:17 PM«

Curious, Tu'Tak enquires of Reyn, How do you plan to break the protection and start it again?"

Posted by: erichenry May 21 2005, 10:58 PM«

Arenea reaches into one of the side-pockets of her backpack and takes out a small pocket mirror. She holds it out to Reyn. Take this" she says quietly. "It will help me find you should we get separated."

Posted by: Reyn May 22 2005, 11:35 AM«

QUOTE (Jedric @ May 21 2005, 07:27 PM) R'shall has agreed to lend you his sword, it may be heavier than you're used to Reyn but I'm sure you'll manage, I'd have had R'shall lend you his armour too but I think it'd be too big. Reyn nods in thanks, but does not take the weapon, My thanks B'rayth, and to R'shall as well, but if you could hold onto it for me until we get out of this I'd appreciate it. After I re-release the spell I'll have my hands full carrying R'shall, and I won't be in any shape to use a weapon." As for the armour, it's a kind offer, Reyn adds with a wink, "But I'll grow my own." Reyn does pocket the small mirror handed to him by Arenea and smiles a thanks to her. Walking over towards the tablet he answers Tu'Tak, You're familiar with the Courts, and so you'd be familiar with the concept of shape-changing. There's an even to better chance that you have some of that ability yourself, yes?" Well, it's taken a while for me to figure out exactly what happened, but to avoid the effects of the protection spell that hit me when I entered I shifted my outer skin like Anna did to protect me. As you can see, I'm just that little bit better at it than poor Anna is. The evident sarcasm in Reyn's voice hints at his opinion of the cocooned woman." I'm going to shape myself around the tablet and stop its magic interacting with the pillar. That should break the spell temporarily. When everyone is ready?

Posted by: doychi May 22 2005, 11:47 AM«

An expression of realisation crosses Tu'Tak's face, to those unfamiliar with demons it appears aggressive. I see. Would it help if you had some assistance?" I believe that if you show me what you intend, I could duplicate the effect myself. If not I believe that B'rayth, R'shall and myself are ready to depart.

Posted by: Reyn May 22 2005, 11:52 AM«

A look of puzzlement crosses Reyn's features as he attempts to answer Tu'Tak's question and fails to find the words. I don't know if I can explain it really, it's almost as if I've grown a surface layer of ... well ... Order, over chaos. Words just don't really explain the concept, and I think we'd do better having you helping the others. Thank you for the offer though."

Posted by: Jedric May 23 2005, 05:05 PM«

As Reyn talks with Tu'Tak B'rayth moves off and gets the sheath for R'shall's sword and arranges a

shoulder rig for it. He then returns and stands ready, his expression is calm but there is a tightness around his eyes as he asks, "Are we ready?"

Posted by: Reyn May 24 2005, 11:30 AM«

Reyn looks around the assembled group, getting a nod from each in response to B'rayth's question. Once he is sure that everyone is prepared he walks slowly over to the tablet and stands there, taking a few deep breaths. "Remember, if this works you'll see something demon-like running towards you holding a shield over its shoulder. Please make sure that it isn't me before you kill it. Surviving this only to be killed by my compatriots would just be so embarrassing." Reyn sits down cross-legged in front of the tablet and lifts it onto his lap. His features and edges blur and become fluid, flowing like tar as black as night over his own shape and the tablet. Within a minute where Reyn once sat is now a egg-shaped black mound, its edges rippling in movement caused not so much by muscles beneath the surface but by something else entirely. As the top of the egg closes there is a popping high above the range of normal hearing. Like a sound that you don't realise is there until it is gone, those in the clearing know that the protection spell over them has stopped. From the egg there is no more movement, no sound, no indication of life. To those that can detect it however, a soft psychic scream can be heard drifting across the clearing.

Posted by: Curufea May 24 2005, 11:41 AM«

Gideon smiles crookedly. "As we are only likely to get away with this once... I hope there aren't too many out there," he says.

Posted by: doychi May 24 2005, 11:46 AM«

As Reyn's form starts to settle, Tu'Tak slowly turns eyeing the edge of the clearing, waiting for the hell creatures to enter. Waiting for everyone to start moving. Waiting... waiting.... It is only moments, but it seems an age.

Posted by: erichenry May 24 2005, 01:48 PM«

Arenea unsheathes her sword and stands holding it. Although the wavy tipped weapon is nearly as long as she is tall, the ease with which she hefts it in one hand indicates that either it is much lighter than it appears, or that she is much stronger than she looks. Beneath her cloak, her free hand closes around the grip of her pistol crossbow.

Posted by: Jedric May 24 2005, 05:11 PM«

B'rayth looks around at his companions and satisfied they are ready he takes a position looking south. He stands casually, holding his sword point down and slightly off to the right. His pale blond hair once almost spiky is now plastered flat to his skull, his darkly tanned skin is slick with moisture. Without turning he remarks, "We'll be heading south toward Guaine, stay close to me and cover each other. If this doesn't work we're in for quite a fight!"

Posted by: theseus May 24 2005, 05:33 PM«



The light in the clearing fades continually, and the pillar falls into deep shadow. As the thickness of the mist increases, the rain finally stops. There is no sight or sound of the enemy approaching, though their casual voices can be heard all around. The obsidian surrounding Anna shows fracture lines. Moments later, it cracks open at the top, dissolving around the form of Anna. Her head shows first, and she looks dazed. As the obsidian disappears completely, she falls to the ground.

Posted by: theseus May 25 2005, 10:15 AM«

As time passes, it becomes obvious that the hell-creatures have not budged from their position outside the clearing.

Posted by: Curufea May 25 2005, 10:52 AM«

Gideon rushes forward to aid Anna, checking that she is still breathing.

Posted by: ericheny May 25 2005, 12:12 PM«

Um, so now what? Arenea asks. "Do we still charge out and try to fight our way through?"

Posted by: Curufea May 25 2005, 04:03 PM«

I'd advise against it, says Gideon as he kneels next to Anna. "They are VERY tough. At least, I've always been defeated by them."

Posted by: theseus May 25 2005, 04:24 PM«

Anna's eyes look up at Gideon weakly. "That felt terrible. I don't like it here."

Posted by: Jedric May 25 2005, 05:08 PM«

B'rayth turns to Gideon and Anna with a partial smile which he quickly extinguishes. If the hellcreatures don't move soon I'd advise trying to sneak out under the cover of the mist. There's no guarantee that the protection spell will resume once Reyn... becomes himself again. I think Reyn was right by the way, they are after me for some reason so I think I'd better go last, if they spot us I'll hold them up as much as I can so you can get a head start. Oh and they use poison coated blades so try not to get hit!

Posted by: theseus May 26 2005, 02:07 AM«

As Reyn holds the tablet within himself, a vision screams through his mind. The tablet is enmeshed in a glowing tapestry, the blue lines that lie beneath all of shadow, clear and cold, moving towards eternity. The lines stretch out, forming an intricate tapestry. Each of them reaching and folding back into themselves, combining into one point at the far edge of the universe. There, a beautiful spider web, artistically wrought, beautiful, powerful, and strident. A beacon of vision and creation, of Order. Static and unmoving. clear and cold, so intense it is almost impossible to behold

without losing sanityGÇª The lines of this artistic creation spread outwards again in the elaborate tapestry, blazing a path underlying all the shadows, endowing them with light and form... At some points it may be possible to fall between these lines, into endless arrays of light and darknessGÇª Gradually the lines draw back into themselves once more as they approach the opposing end of the universe, where the Courts of Chaos lieGÇª As the lines reach the shadows that fall under the influence of the Logrus, they become hidden, but still presentGÇª At the centre of the Courts is the terrible sentience of Chaos, the LogrusGÇª Its dark and twisting beauty constantly writhing in an attempt to hide from the clear and cold lines of eternity that seek to ensnare itGÇª Its essence lashes out at Reyn, alternately laughing and hurtingGÇª

Posted by: Curufea May 26 2005, 08:25 AM«

In the act of comforting Anna, Gideon stops short in mid sentence and stares at Reyn. He shakes his head as if trying to dislodge a subconscious thought, or perhaps to remove a nagging memory before turning back to the woman. We're surrounded again, Anna. But we are trying to find a way out. He murmurs to himself, but just in case, I should..." Gideon looks around the clearing and raises an eyebrow in surprise and recognition.. Leaving her side he walks towards the edge of the clearing, bending down and retrieving a small box from the ground before returning. He gives a perfunctory smile, even here...", and starts playing with the box."

Posted by: theseus May 28 2005, 03:37 AM«

Anna stands tentatively. GÇ£The black demons are here?GÇ¥ She looks around the clearing still disoriented. GÇ£Why arenGÇÖt they attacking?GÇ¥ Her gaze falls upon Tu'Tak, and she stares at him horrified.

Posted by: doychi May 28 2005, 07:21 AM«

As the horror races across Anna's face Tu'Tak advises her You have nothing to worry about." And with a sweeping gesture, "I face the creatures out there as much as any one here."

Posted by: doychi May 28 2005, 09:46 AM«

As Tu'Tak turns back to watch for the hell creatures he notes If we don't do something I fear that the something we can't deal with might be waiting for us." and pausing for a moment, "Perhaps we should try for over the waiting hordes. I think I might know a creature that can carry one, or two, perhaps and I don't remember seeing any flying hell creatures."

Posted by: Sim May 29 2005, 11:05 AM«

Yeehsa looks thoughtful. We are going south, right?" She looks to the others in the clearing, I'm going to try something, if it works, it might only work for a few moments, so we will need to be quick. I'm going to try to draw them north, so be ready to run..." She turns to face the north and closes her eyes.

Posted by: theseus May 29 2005, 02:19 PM«

Continued from The Clearing II... Yehsa looks thoughtful. "We are going south, right?" She looks to the others in the clearing, "I'm going to try something, if it works, it might only work for a few moments, so we will need to be quick. I'm going to try to draw them north, so be ready to run..." She turns to face the north and closes her eyes.

Posted by: theseus May 29 2005, 04:39 PM«

Several hell-creatures give a huge war-cry, and there is a roaring response from their fellows all around the clearing. The sounds of running footsteps can be heard approaching throughout the mist. BÖrayth, gives a war-cry of his own, moving quickly to intercept what seems the largest concentration of the green and lizard-like hell-creatures coming in from the south. With a whirlwind of hacks and slashes, and clangs of sword against sword, he plows into them, hell-creatures falling all about him. Anna produces a knife, tentatively considers for a moment, before running for TuÖtak. If you have a way out of here, Öm all for itÖÖ

Posted by: Curufea May 31 2005, 11:02 AM«

Gideon stands from his crouch over the cube, looking up in shock at the approaching monster. This humanoid appears larger than the others at seven foot, and also sports better armour and cleaner sword. Its red eyes set inside its sickly green skin flash in anger. Gideon's staff is on the ground by his right foot, the cube in his left hand. As the beast charges him, he throws the box at its head. A massive forearm comes up to dash the box away, but at contact, the leather bound arm bursts into flame. The creature drops his sword in surprise, but steadfastly ignores the fire and smoke, continuing its charge, hands extended. Gideon falls onto his back as the hell-creature pounces, causing it to misjudge the leap. Its ankles are caught by the falling man, and then thrust into the air. Gideon hits the ground hard with his back as the creature is somersaulted in a fiery cartwheel, over his prone form, and lands awkwardly. Gideon stands again as his enemy, fire now extinguished, also picks itself up, shaking its head from disorientation. Gideon walks over to his staff. The beast charges again, the heat of its rage steaming from its mouth. Die, tainted vermin! it snarls. To back the words, it surges forward, head down, as if to head butt his target. Gideon flips his foot, the staff is in his hand. The beast is upon him. He charges into its arms. The staff is levered behind its shoulder blade and its neck in the confusion of straining bodies and limbs. There is a snap. It falls.

Posted by: ericheny May 31 2005, 06:04 PM«

In the meantime, a snarling hell-creature tears out of the mist at Arenea. Her hand flashes from beneath her cloak revealing the pistol crossbow. There is a soft 'twang' as she squeezes the trigger. The bolt buries itself in the hell creature's eye. It collapses to the ground. A second hell-creature comes from the mist, and Arenea retreats, bringing her sword upwards, slicing through the chest of the creature. The beast crumples to the ground in a pool of ichor. Arenea retreats quickly, weaving in and out of the other hell-creatures to reach Reyn's side.

Posted by: doychi Jun 1 2005, 07:28 AM«

He retreats to Öshall's side, Anna following close behind. He starts the shifting process again, now turning into a large white hawk. As Tu'Tak shifts, a hell-creature looms out of the mist at him, but Anna throws her dagger through its neck, killing it instantly. Tu'Tak's form continues to grow, now twice the size of a man, and doesn't stop. The size of a draft horse and finally a large elephant. In

Tu'Tak's place stands a small roc, a beautiful white hawk the size of a large elephant. Something about the bird hints at it being a child rather than a fully grown adult. The hawk cranes its neck a couple of times, surveying the area and then reaches out with one claw, picking up RGÇÖshall. Just as Tu'Tak does so, Anna rushes towards him, jumping onto Tu'tak's back and reaches out for Yeesha to take her hand.

Posted by: Sim Jun 2 2005, 12:35 AM«

Yeesha looks to the offered hand, then to R'shall. She looks a little nervous as she turns and addresses Tu'Tak. I think it would be best if I stayed with R'shall. I can tend to his injuries and offer some defense should something happen. Will you be able to lift R'shall, myself and the litter if I climb on?

Posted by: doychi Jun 2 2005, 07:42 AM«

The giant hawk cranes it's neck, and gives a slight nod.

Posted by: erichenry Jun 2 2005, 12:45 PM«

Arenea crouches next to Reyn. She watches as a hell-creature closes in on TuGÇÖTak, Anna, RGÇÖshall and Yeesha. She plucks out a star-shaped throwing blade and flings it at the creatureGÇÖs back. The blade buries itself into a gap between the beastGÇÖs scales. The hell-creature snaps upright as though stung by a bee and claws at its back. It shudders and collapses as the venom on the blade works its way through the creatureGÇÖs system.

Posted by: Sim Jun 4 2005, 01:30 PM«

Yeesha hesitates for a moment, looking at the large eagle's talons. Anna leans further back, bringing her hand closer to Yeesha. That's a stupid idea. Now get up here so we can go." She waves her hand beckoning." Yeesha looks to the hand, then pushes forward to grab hold. Grunting with effort she pulls herself up onto Tu'Tak's back and holds on tight. Okay, ready.

Posted by: Curufea Jun 4 2005, 05:45 PM«

The swords sway slightly in the hands of the large monsters as they cautiously approach the man with his staff. The swords have weight, and purpose, lending immediacy to the openness of the clearing. Gideon pauses as the two foremost beasts pick up their pace. Alongside the body of their captain, he stoops as they charge. Gideon anchors the staff against his foot and the ground. As the first hell-creature lunges with his sword, Gideon brings the staff upwards into his attackerGÇÖs torso. The air of its lungs exits the beast's maw with a roaring of pain. The second hell-creature raises up his sword, ready to slash it downwards. As the downstroke comes, Gideon bends over and picks up the dead captain's lost sword. The hell-creatureGÇÖs forearm comes down but bounces off GideonGÇÖs shoulder. Gideon rises and twists upward, with his legs adding to his upward strength, his sword shears the hell-creatureGÇÖs extended arm in half. The adrenaline of the moment not yet overcome by the wound, the hell-creature stumbles over the captainGÇÖs body, into Gideon who lets go of his staff, and spins his own body over the fallen wounded. As it begins to pick itself up off the ground, awkwardly with one arm, the winded hell-creature recovers. The hell-creature grabs the staff and

swings it at GideonGÇÖ's head. It cleaves empty air however, as Gideon ducks and launches himself into the beastGÇÖ's abdomen. A quick thrust, a turn, and he beheads the other before more are upon him. His body is lost in the mass of onrushing bestial forms save for a single green arm seen spinning slowly out of the centre, and into the air, before falling and bouncing to the ground.

Posted by: doychi Jun 5 2005, 11:34 AM«

On Yeesha's pronouncement Tu'Tak kicks off with his remaining leg and heaves his mighty wings, launching him and his riders into the air with surprising grace. Once in the air Tu'Tak circles, climbing quickly.

Posted by: Jedric Jun 7 2005, 03:24 AM«

Charging forward BGÇÖrayth screams out his battle cry, words mangled and almost unrecognisable even to RGÇÖshall. About him BGÇÖrayth sees the hell-creatures moving forward, their features a blur in the pearlescent mist. A group of four move towards him, swords drawn and fangs bared in matching grimaces of hate and loathing. As the first hell-creature reaches him BGÇÖrayth sees his foe's arm move, and almost without conscious thought he sways right and ducks under the blow aimed at his left shoulder, turning counter-clockwise his sword lances up and enters under the creature's sternum. Blood gushes forth, black in the uncertain light, as the beast falls to the ground BGÇÖrayth has already spun away and as he moves his left elbow strikes the nearest hell-creatureGÇÖ's jaw, with a cracking sound the hell-creature falls to the earth, unconscious. Leaping forward BGÇÖrayth kicks the next hell-creature's knee, as it falls it screams in agony its leg obviously shattered, moving again B'rayth launches an over hand cut at the weapon arm of the last of the four foemen, a shrill scream escapes the throat of the reptile man as its arm falls free, severed cleanly the stump pumps forth its life blood. As the fourth creature falls, more shapes move into view from the mist, BGÇÖrayth begins to laugh exultantly, he barely hears the sounds of battle his heart pounds so loudly in his ears. His feet dance a deadly step as he fights, ever moving, evading the frantic attacks of the hell-creatures. His blade lancing and cleaving into their bewildered ranks, his arms and legs weapons little less deadly than his blade. As he downs his seventh foeman he sees TuGÇÖtakGÇÖ's avian form ascend to the sky, but this is a mere distraction for him as he enters the world of combat, his foeGÇÖ's movements seem to slow, the barest contraction of a muscle sends him warning of his enemy's intent. The hell-creatures fall about him but they keep coming, more and more of them, surrounding him.

Posted by: Reyn Jun 7 2005, 08:32 AM«

Locked within his own cocoon, layer upon layer upon layer of armour not only between himself and the outside world, but also between himself and the object held in the middle of the black ovoid that he has become, Reyn has no knowledge through sight or hearing of what is transpiring in the glade. QUOTE At the centre of the Courts is the terrible sentience of Chaos, the LogrusGÇª Its dark and twisting beauty constantly writhing in an attempt to hide from the clear and cold lines of eternity that seek to ensnare itGÇª Its essence lashes out at Reyn, alternately laughing and hurtingGÇª Like an irritant that is eventually converted into a pearl, containing the tablet takes most of ReynGÇÖ's concentration, but a small part of his mind GÇªlistensGÇÖ for the psychic signatures of the others, mainly those of Yeesha and Anna, waiting for the moment when they wink out GÇª the moment that will indicate that they have left the glade or are dead. When that moment finally comes Reyn allows the pain he has contained within himself to explode outwards, using that energy to shift quickly to his favoured demon form and as a result flinging the tablet to the ground without having to resort to

touching it once more. Like a figure that had been shaped into a ball Reyn unrolls and continues to grow, black elongated head and vicious sweeping barbed tail being the last to form into view. With a battle roar that actually sounds like a hundred snakes hissing in unison, the Giger-ish alien creature stretches out the elongated claws on its hands and turns, seemingly ready to pounce on the nearest enemy or friend who fails to identify themselves quickly enough.

Posted by: erichenry Jun 7 2005, 09:57 AM«

It's me, Arenea the pale woman says quickly. She has experience in dealing with Chaosians in demon and knows they sometimes have trouble telling friend from foe." She points to the pile of hell-creatures under which Gideon had vanished. Gideon's under there" she says. "He probably needs our help."

Posted by: theseus Jun 7 2005, 10:20 AM«

Coming from the north of the clearing, a screaming horde of hell-creatures emerges from the mists, heading towards Reyn and Arenea at full charge. A slow pulse of bluish white light emerges from the tablet. As it hits Reyn, his colour darkens for a moment. As it reaches the pillar, the shadows around it vanish, the runes engraved on it glowing a spectacular blue. The nearby fallen bodies burst into flame, wiped away by the blue-white pulse. The severed arm disappears in a puff of flame and smoke. The ripple continues outwards. The pile of hell-creatures on top of Gideon burst out into a gigantic fireball, then convert quickly to dust, leaving a burning Gideon in their wake. Dust clouds fall about him, which likewise vanish. He rolls quickly in the wet grass to snuff out the flames. One after another, the hell-creatures besieging BGÖrayth erupt into flame like roman candles, falling to dust and nothingness. The horde of screaming enemies coming from the north witness the fate of some of their fellows, and attempt to retreat, but too late. Within a moment they erupt into a glorious flaming wall, and then are gone. And the clearing abruptly falls serene once more.

Posted by: theseus Jun 7 2005, 10:21 AM«

BGÖrayth, Gideon and Arenea start glowing blue like the runes of the pillar, a sense of well-being coursing through them. In the glow of light, Gideon's burns begin to fade, and BGÖrayth's various injuries also heal themselves.

Posted by: Curufea Jun 7 2005, 11:48 AM«

Frell, frell, frell, frell!, Gideon exclaims in his throes and gyrations on the ground before the flames are completely snuffed out." Standing up, he peers around at the scorched ground, unaccountably healed and somewhat surprised. He takes the time to knock imaginary dust of the front of his shirt with the back of his hand. Twice. Hmm, I seem to be going through clothing at a rather alarming rate. Gideon smiles.

Posted by: Reyn Jun 7 2005, 02:22 PM«

QUOTE Gideon smiles. And looks up to see the slick-black demon form of Reyn towering over him. Fetid breath washes over his face as the second set of teeth slowly extend from the creature's mouth, the razor sharp metallic teeth dripping a gooey saliva onto his shoulder as they close next to

his ear. The motion is slow, careful and deliberate. The tension the creature's muscles are under is obvious as it holds itself back from going berserk, the built up pain from holding the tablet compounded by the fact that itGÇÖs targets of choice, (pointed out by Arenea), have just evaporated into flame.

Posted by: Jedric Jun 7 2005, 05:13 PM«

B'rayth stands shoulders slumped head down, he breathes deeply, what is visible of his face is serene. His blades hangs almost forgotten in his hand. Sighing he turns with a gentle smile to look at the others, seeing Reyn he grins slightly. Your looks are not improved my little Lord Reyn, if that is you under that grisly skin.

Posted by: Curufea Jun 8 2005, 08:53 AM«

QUOTE (Reyn @ Jun 7 2005, 03:22 PM) And looks up to see the slick-black demon form of Reyn towering over him. Fetid breath washes over his face as the second set of teeth slowly extend from the creatureGÇÖs mouth, the razor sharp metallic teeth dripping a gooey saliva onto his shoulder as they close next to his ear. Ah! Shocked, Gideon backs away from the monster, desperately looking around for one of the fallen weapons. Pausing only at the doubt that B'rayth has raised.

Posted by: ericheny Jun 8 2005, 09:48 AM«

Reyn Arenea says quickly but softly. As she speaks, she tries to keep her tone soothing and reassuring. "Reyn," she repeats, "the enemy has gone for now. These people are our allies. Our allies, remember?"

Posted by: doychi Jun 9 2005, 11:58 AM«

Far above Yeesha, Anna and R'shall, carried by Tu'Tak, are heading roughly south. After a while Tu'Tak starts to circle, slowly descending into another clump of trees.

Posted by: Reyn Jun 9 2005, 01:12 PM«

There is a movement in the Reyn-demon that can best be described as a blurring of the edges which increases to engulf most of his body. The blackness of his skin flows back into the texture of clothes and before long Reyn sits at Arenea's feet, his legs curled underneath him and his face in his hands. That ... was ... unpleasant ... mutters Reyn in an exhausted voice. "A few deep breaths later he continues, I could see everything, all of shadow, lying between it's two end points. Chaos and the Logrus at one end, and something unspeakably horrible at the other. It was like watching two parallel lines meet in an infinity of sterile stasis where nothing ever changes." Looking up at Arenea his normally baby-face is one of a scared child. And the worst part was it knew we were here. It knew."

Posted by: ericheny Jun 9 2005, 02:17 PM«

With the hesitation of one who is not certain how her actions will be taken, Arenea kneels down and puts her arms around Reyn, pulling his head onto her shoulder. Arenea's skin is oddly cool to the touch. It's alright she whispers softly, a musical lilt to her voice. "I guess we now know what it is

Yeesha's guides expect us to stop." As she speaks she rocks slowly back and forth."

Posted by: Jedric Jun 9 2005, 05:59 PM«

B'rayth listens to Reyn and Arenea with his head still slightly down, a small sardonic smile is evident. Turning his head he watches as Tu'Tak's avian form descends. Time to move, there may be more of the hell-creatures about. If we hurry we should reach Guaine before dark... Reyn do you need help or are you able to walk unaided?

Posted by: Reyn Jun 9 2005, 07:47 PM«

Reyn holds onto Arenea perhaps a moment longer than might be expected before pulling himself to his feet and taking a step back from her. The look on his face is a mixture of gratitude and concern, although any specific cause for concern is not readily discernable. I'll be fine B'rayth, I just need to catch my breath. Lead on, I will follow.

Posted by: erichenry Jun 9 2005, 10:41 PM«

Arenea also climbs to her feet. She smiles a shy smile at Reyn and says B'rayth is right, Lord Reyn. We need to move on. We do not know how many of those creatures there were or how far that wave of destruction extended. There could be more on their way as we speak." She takes a hesitant step towards Reyn and continues If you've got your breath back we should move. You can lean on me if you need support."

Posted by: Jedric Jun 9 2005, 11:58 PM«

B'rayth nods to Reyn and glances quickly at Gideon and Arenea before turning on his heel and setting off south at a brisk pace.

Posted by: theseus Jun 10 2005, 06:24 AM«

QUOTE Far above Yeesha, Anna and R'shall, carried by Tu'Tak, are heading roughly south. After a while Tu'Tak starts to circle, slowly descending into another clump of trees. Anna continues to hold on tightly to TuGÇÖtakGÇÖs back with her legs. As they descend, she thrusts a finger towards the eastGÇª GÇ£WhatGÇÖs that?GÇ¥ she asks. Several columns of rising black smoke are visible over a set of nearby hills.

Posted by: Curufea Jun 10 2005, 10:13 AM«

Picking up one of the discarded swords to replace the now broken staff, splintered in the pile of bodies, Gideon follows. The box, lost and forgotten, is left behind.

Posted by: Jedric Jun 10 2005, 04:58 PM«

B'rayth angles his course to cut through the clump of trees that Tu'Tak landed in. Shortly the group



comprising Tu'Tak, Yeesha, R'shall and Anna come into sight.

Posted by: theseus Jun 15 2005, 02:02 PM«

Anna slides off Tu'GÇÖTakGÇÖs back as he touches down. She walks over to the others, looking bewildered. GÇ£ThereGÇÖs smoke coming from just over the hills that way,GÇ¥ she says, pointing. GÇ£We saw it when we were in the air.GÇ¥ GÇ£This is more bewildering than I thought. Where are we exactly? Someone better tell me whatGÇÖs going on here, and how much IGÇÖm getting paid for it! And what in the six hells is he?GÇ¥ she asks, gesturing at Tu'Tak, the friendly roc.

Posted by: doychi Jun 15 2005, 05:30 PM«

As Tu'Tak recedes into his natural form, he turns to look at Anna with a slightly amused expression, "Actually there's seven, but who's counting." He then continues, without hesitation, "This place and what we seek, it appears, is a long way from the Courts. So I'm sure any deals you made with the others before you left will take that into account. Oh, and I'm Tu'Tak, Lord B'rayth's servant."

Posted by: Jedric Jun 15 2005, 05:42 PM«

B'rayth enters the copse and overhearing the brief conversation he grins at Tu'Tak briefly, "Lord B'rayth now is it?" Turning to Anna he comments, "This is Krinne, you need know no more for now, when the others arrive we'll decide whether to investigate the smoke." B'rayth turns away with a worried expression and quietly mutters "Frayketh" questioningly, whether this is an obscure word or a name is not apparent."

Posted by: theseus Jun 16 2005, 03:02 AM«

Anna crosses her arms and frowns, waiting impatiently, tapping her foot. Reyn, Arenea and Gideon, who is now walking without a limp, arrive in the copse, completing the party. Anna speaks loudly, obviously annoyed. GÇ£All right, I will ask again. I made no deal in coming here. I was concerned for VerGÇª Gideon, so I followed him to make sure he was fine. I donGÇÖt know where the Courts are, or for that matter what they are. But IGÇÖm pretty sure Krinne isnGÇÖt one of the city states of Ismir...GÇ¥

Posted by: Reyn Jun 16 2005, 11:00 AM«

Reyn mutters something to Arenea as they rejoin the group, but his voice is too low to be heard by those already waiting in the glade. As they reach the others Reyn interrupts Anna's tirade, "I think we managed to slice, dice and fry most if not all of our pursuers, but whoever sent them will undoubtedly learn of their failure before too long. For the moment Anna, you're with us, and the only 'payment' we can offer is the somewhat dubious safety you'll enjoy as one of our number. Of course, if you'd rather head back the way we came and try to work out a deal with the demons back there..."

Posted by: erichenry Jun 16 2005, 02:07 PM«

Arenea nods ever so slightly in response to whatever Reyn's comment was as the pair enter the clearing. Once they have rejoined the others she remains silent, although her eyes continue to flick

about, obviously scanning for threats.

Posted by: Curufea Jun 16 2005, 02:38 PM«

Lady Anna, Gideon begins, "I seem to be getting better and better. I was not even defeated in that little fracas I had earlier, which quite surprised me. I am happy to see you up and about yourself, after what happened to you when you first came here..." He pauses and thinks for a moment. Yeeshah's tapestry thingy, Anna, where did you leave it? I take it that you got out of the sewers of Ismir before using it?

Posted by: theseus Jun 16 2005, 03:00 PM«

Anna looks a little crestfallen when Reyn tells her there is no reward available for her. GÇ£I hoped that saving the universe from destruction would pay betterGÇªGÇ¥ She looks at Gideon reproachfully, as if this was his fault. GÇ£I have no idea what happened back at the clearing. I just remember arriving, intense pain, and thenGÇª blackness.GÇ¥ She considers for a few moments before answering GideonGÇÖs question. GÇ£I have a secret place in the tunnels where I keep a stash of treasure. After the demons vanished, I put the tapestry behind an expensive rug on one of the walls. I held up a corner of the rug to look at the tapestry and walk through it. The rug would have fallen back into place afterwards. ItGÇÖs probably safer there than most places in the city.GÇ¥ GÇ£And I thought we werenGÇÖt using titles, real or presumedGÇª Gideon.GÇ¥

Posted by: Curufea Jun 16 2005, 03:14 PM«

Ah, sorry Anna. Nerves. This is all so new to me. Gideon shrugs his shoulders.

Posted by: doychi Jun 16 2005, 03:19 PM«

Realising that the respite will be short lived, Tu'Tak pulls a loaf of bread, some cheese, a knife and a small board out of his pack and proceeds to cut the bread and cheese into slices. When he is satisfied with his preparations he rises and offers it to B'rayth.

Posted by: Jedric Jun 16 2005, 06:16 PM«

B'rayth shakes his head adding a slight smile to soften the gesture. You eat it Tu'Tak, if you need to shift again you'll need the energy. Turning to the group B'rayth looks them over critically before speaking. Anna here saw a column of smoke off that way, he gestures in the appropriate direction." I suggest we investigate, it'll not put us too far behind in getting to Guaine.

Posted by: doychi Jun 16 2005, 10:20 PM«

Tu'Tak wanders over to his pack and draws out another loaf and wanders over to Reyn and offers it to him. Next he approaches Arenea and then moves to each of the others, finishing with R'shall and then Anna, offering them some of the food he has prepared. Finally he returns to B'rayth, offering the platter to him again before finishing anything that is left, himself.

Posted by: Reyn Jun 17 2005, 11:41 AM«

Reyn accepts the offered food with a smile and quickly wolfs it down. Between bites he addresses B'rayth, "If this smoke doesn't take us too far out of our way then I'd prefer to investigate it. Better to waste some small amount of time than leave a potential problem at our backs." If we're going to enter a populated area however, Reyn continues after finishing his food, "Is there anything we need to know that you can tell us? Any cultural no-no's, odd customs that could get us into trouble and do you care if we waste any civilians who try to stop us or should we try to use non-fatal means of persuasion?"

Posted by: Curufea Jun 17 2005, 03:31 PM«

And while where in a question answering mood, what was that light earlier that killed those demon things and healed us? Was it the same thing that was keeping them away earlier?, says Gideon."

Posted by: Jedric Jun 17 2005, 05:18 PM«

B'rayth again shakes his head at Tu'Tak when he offers the food. He stands still for a moment thinking over Reyn's and Gideon's questions. Answering Gideon first B'rayth looks him full in the face with a slightly puzzled frown. I've seen something similar before, when I was attacked by the wraith... a creature... I call it the wraith although I don't know what it was really. I have no idea what the light was but I feel an affinity with it, I can tell you no more. Turning to look at Reyn, B'rayth smiles and frowns simultaneously, Do not harm anyone if you can help it, they will be Lord G'orhm's people, and I will remind you that I am still in the service of the Yarla. As to cultural taboos, try to ensure you introduce yourself directly to every person you wish to speak to, mentioning your name in someone's presence does not constitute an introduction. " B'rayth smiles here before turning to look at the others." If we're ready, let's move.

Posted by: ericheny Jun 18 2005, 05:48 PM«

Arenea takes the food Tu'Tak offers her with a murmured Thank you". She eats in silence as she listens to the discussions of the others. Anyone watching her will notice she eats it by nibbling with small precise bites."

Posted by: Jedric Jun 20 2005, 08:41 PM«

B'rayth looks over at R'shall and asks. Are you alright boy, we're going to move on again now? R'shall shrugs gingerly before answering, I'd be better indoors, but yes." B'rayth nods and smiles slightly. Tu'Tak can you manage R'shall. I'll lead on. Try to keep up everyone. B'rayth walks out of the trees and heads for Frayketh.

Posted by: doychi Jun 20 2005, 10:55 PM«

As B'rayth walks out of the clearing Tu'Tak wanders over to his pack, dusting off the board he was carrying the food on, and puts it away. As he does this he studies at R'shall and the litter. Then he turns to Yeesha and says, I think this would be simpler if I had some help. Yeesha, would you mind?" As he waits for Yeesha's answer he rises, slinging his pack.

Posted by: Sim Jun 21 2005, 08:00 AM«

Yeesha looks up from the last bites of her meal. Yes. Of course. What do you have in mind?“

Posted by: doychi Jun 21 2005, 09:22 AM«

Tu'Tak gives Yeesha a confused look and then suggests, Perhaps if you could carry the front of the litter, and I the other. That way we can both bear R'shall's weight.” Tu'Tak pauses a moment, considering Yeesha and the litter before continuing, “If you have anything that's going to get in the way of carrying R'shall, I'm happy to add it to my pack.”

Posted by: Reyn Jun 21 2005, 01:17 PM«

After considering his words for a moment Reyn walks briskly up behind B'rayth, following him into the trees. M'Lord, Reyn says as he comes up beside him, “I don't believe we have been formally introduced by your custom. I am Reyn of House Tassarad. Thank you for your welcome to your world.” After a pause Reyn adds, May I borrow R'shall's sword from you now?“

Posted by: Jedric Jun 21 2005, 07:19 PM«

B'rayth pauses at Reyn's call. After the introduction B'rayth nods sharply, formally. Thank you my lord. I am BGÇÖrayth MGÇÖka NaGÇÖSahv, currently in service to Lord G'orhm, Yarla of Guaine. B'rayth smiles slightly as he looks at Reyn. It's just B'rayth though. To Reyn's question regarding R'shall's sword, B'rayth shrugs and answers. I have no objections and I'm sure R'shall won't either. I hope you have some skill with it. B'rayth then casually hands the sword over, he then turns and walks on, over his shoulder he comments. Better late than never Reyn, better late than never.

Posted by: Sim Jun 21 2005, 08:18 PM«

Yeesha looks at the litter, then back to Tu'Tak. I will do my best, but I don't know how quick I'm going to be. She steps forward and wipes the palm of her hands on her rough pants. Carefully she kneels down between the two protruding poles and carefully sets the side straps of her backpack around the poles. She positions her hands a few inches in front of the straps and nods her head. Three, two, one... Heave! she grunts through gritted teeth, allowing most of the weight to be taken through the straps on her bag.” She takes a deep breath, the flushed colour fading from her face. Okay, ready.“

Posted by: doychi Jun 21 2005, 08:46 PM«

As Yeesha says Heave” Tu'Tak lifts his end of the litter. Once the litter has been settled between two, Tu'Tak shifts the weight of the litter so that he is taking most of the weight.” With the litter comfortably between the two Yeesha and Tu'Tak follow B'rayth.

# Burnt Village

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